



September 1, 2006

Two are sentenced in a gang-related pipe bomb explosion that maimed a rival's mother

A federal judge today sentenced to prison **Bobby Soundara**, 20 and **Vanhhatdy Souvaunaxab**, 19, for causing a pipe bomb explosion at a Cranston house in which a woman lost an eye. An investigation by Cranston Police and federal agencies determined that the bombing was related to street gang rivalries.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the sentences, which U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith imposed in U.S. District Court, Providence. Judge Smith sentenced Soundara to ten years and Souvaunaxab to 90 months in federal prison.

Under federal arson statutes, the defendants faced a seven-year prison sentence for causing an explosion that resulted in injuries. However, citing the seriousness of the victim's injuries and the involvement of criminal street gangs, the government asked the court to impose a longer sentence. Both men admitted being members of the Laos Pride gang. Their intended target was affiliated with a rival gang, the Young Bloods.

"Today's sentencing demonstrates our firm resolve that there will be zero tolerance toward gang violence in Rhode Island," United States Corrente said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard W. Rose today presented evidence of a long-standing rivalry between Laos Pride and the Young Bloods. The evidence detailed a series of beatings and drive-by shootings between 2004 and 2005, culminating in the bombing at a house on West Harry Street in September 2005.

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At a hearing in June at which the defendants pled guilty, Assistant U.S. Attorney Rose said that the government could prove that Souvaunaxab made four pipe bombs and was in a caravan of cars early in the morning of September 11 when Soundara tossed one of the bombs through the window of the house.

The intended target lived at the house but was not home at the time. However, his mother was awakened by the sound of shattering glass, and, when she went to investigate, the bomb exploded, causing the loss of an eye and other serious injuries.

Soundara was arrested in November on a federal complaint that resulted from an investigation by Cranston Police, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Providence Police and the Rhode Island State Fire Marshal. Souvaunaxab was arrested in January following the return of a two-count federal indictment.

Souvaunaxab admitted that he made the bomb from discarded pipe that he had taken from his employer and used gun powder from fireworks purchased in New Hampshire. He used a hot glue gun to seal the pipe containing the volatile explosives. Soundara admitted throwing the bomb into the West Harry Street house.

“It’s important to note that, while we will aggressively prosecute gang violence, at the same time we are reaching out to young people to deter them from the gang path,” U.S. Attorney Corrente said. “We have brought our anti-gang message to more than a dozen schools in the metropolitan area. As the school year resumes, in partnership with the Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence, we will be bringing that message to additional schools under the banner Street Smarts.”

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